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SUBJECT: KOSOVO: SERB MODERATES DISMAYED BY MENTION OF  
PARTITION, WAITING TO SEE ON EULEX AND RELATED ISSUES

REF: BELGRADE 1029

Classified By: Ambassador Tina S. Kaidanow for Reasons 1.4 (b), (d).

11. (C) Summary. In the wake of Serbia's successful effort to have its case against Kosovo's independence referred to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and as EULEX deployment draws closer, Kosovo Serbs remain concerned about the direction of events. Serbian President Boris Tadic's comments on partition to Serbian national broadcaster RTS on September 29 have caused deep anxiety among Serbs south of the Ibar River despite Tadic's later qualification of his statement. By contrast, in the North, at least one hardline Kosovo Serb leader -- the Serb National Council's Nebojsa Jovic -- refused to dismiss partition as an option. Some moderates in the South, including Father Sava Janjic of Visoki Decani Serbian Orthodox monastery, see direct talks between Belgrade and Pristina as the only possible way to address the many pressing issues affecting the Kosovo Serb community. The Serbian Ministry for Kosovo, however, remains categorical that it will not permit Kosovo Serb participation in the implementation of the Ahtisaari Plan, especially when the topic under discussion is decentralization. End Summary.

#### Predictable Divisions over Partition

12. (C) Serbian President Tadic's mention of partition on September 29 as a last-resort option for settling the Kosovo question has rattled moderate Kosovo Serb leaders living south of the Ibar River. The southern Serbs have long opposed partition, an option they generally consider harmful to their interests. Tadic's subsequent qualification of his statements did little to mollify our moderate contacts. On October 1, soon after the subject was raised, Dragan Velic of the moderate Serb National Council in Gracanica told us that the very mention of partition was disturbing, and its implementation would be disastrous for the enclaves in the South. He also called partition a "Pandora's Box" which would touch off problems elsewhere in the Balkans. Randjel Nojkic, former Kosovo MP and director of Serbian PTT (Post, Telecom, and Telegraph) in Gracanica, affirmed to us on October 9 that Tadic had raised the issue as a "trial balloon," a commonly held view in the enclaves. Also expressing his disapproval of partition, Father Sava Janjic of Visoki Decani Monastery told us on October 10 that Tadic "must know that this can't work" and disconsolately added

that he did not believe Tadic really cared at all about Kosovo, an opinion shared by many of our moderate Kosovo Serb contacts.

#### Direct Dialogue Necessary

13. (C) Nojkic and Sava each told us that they continue to be disturbed by the lack of direct contact between the Serbian and Kosovo governments, something they both consider essential to dealing with the numerous issues facing Kosovo Serbs: police, property, electricity supply and billing, and returns, among others. Given Belgrade's firm stance on avoiding official contact with Pristina and opting instead to engage UNMIK to the exclusion of other interlocutors, neither thought that productive dialogue would occur soon. Both expressed the hope, shared by many others in the enclaves, that in the wake of Serbia's successful effort to get the UN General Assembly to refer its case against Kosovo independence to the ICJ, a way might be found to set aside status debates and concentrate on Belgrade-Pristina cooperation on issues of mutual importance.

#### Decentralization without Serb Representation

14. (C) Signals remain very bad on Serb willingness to engage on decentralization as conceived in the Ahtisaari plan. Nojkic, as he has in previous discussions, expressed support for the general concept of decentralization in Kosovo, which in his opinion would be very much to the benefit of the Serb community. However, he also expressed his disagreement with the decentralization plan currently

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being pursued by the Kosovo government under the auspices of the Ahtisaari Plan. CCK Gracanica official Goran Arsic, speaking on behalf of the Kosovo Ministry, explicitly rebuffed any notion that Kosovo Serbs would participate in the Kosovo government's initiative, pointedly asking poloff "who will you find to help you in this effort?" He went on to reject the notion that Gracanica's municipal community officer (a Kosovo Serb) could possibly possess any legitimacy in the community to lead the decentralization process there.

#### EULEX As Long as Belgrade Says Yes

15. (C) Moderates such as Nojkic and Sava continue to express support for Kosovo Serb cooperation with the EULEX police and justice mission. Voicing a commonly held opinion among Serb moderates, Sava told us that "there is no other option" for Kosovo Serbs than to cooperate with the international mission that will supervise police and the court system. However, the moderates continue to be dismayed that hardline elements in the North reject EULEX's imminent deployment and hope that the Serbian government will make it clear that Serbs can talk to and work with the mission. Northern Serbs, however, continue to make clear their hostility to EULEX. Serb National Council (North) chairman Nebojsa Jovic expressed to us, as he has consistently to date, his opposition to EULEX, suggesting that a EULEX deployment could well be met with violence in the north. However, he also told us that the recent re-opening of the UNMIK courthouse in northern Mitrovica was a positive development given the "lack of the rule of law" in the north. Jovic qualified his support by reiterating opposition to any "Albanian" participation in the court.

Comment: Holding Pattern.

16. (C) Kosovo Serb moderates continue to be frustrated by the lack of movement on Belgrade's part toward a tacit improvement in relations between Serbia and Kosovo. Their fear of partition, exacerbated by Tadic's comments, and their desire to accept a practical relationship with EULEX, is palpable, and they are watching closely to see what Belgrade's next move will be. As always, the divisions between northern and southern Serbs are serious and

meaningful. It remains unclear whether Tadic will in the end find a strategy that limits the power and influence of the former while giving hope to the latter. End Comment.

KAIDANOW